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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
National Foreign Assessment Center

7 April 1980

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED
1998

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: AN-26 Aircraft in Cuba

1. Eight AN-26 transport aircraft with Soviet markings have been observed at Havana's Campo Libertad Airfield. They are separated from twelve Cuban AN-26s also at the airfield. Why these aircraft, which have been in Cuba for more than eight months, retain Soviet markings is not clear. There has been no apparent connection between these aircraft and the Soviet brigade.

2. The USSR agreed in 1977 to supply Cuba with 20 AN-26 transports. The aircraft were ferried to Cuba by Soviet crews between October 1978 and July 1979. They were delivered with Soviet markings and bort numbers. This was unusual since exported aircraft normally are given the recipient's markings before leaving the USSR. Twelve of the 20 AN-26s were given Cuban markings soon after arriving in Cuba.

3. A review indicates that a total of 20 AN-26s have been in Cuba since July 1979--ten with Cuban Air Force markings, two belonging to the Cuban civilian airline, and eight with Soviet markings. Until May 1979, AN-26s with Soviet markings and those with Cuban markings were intermixed. In May, the five with Soviet markings which were then present were separated from the ten with Cuban Air Force markings. In July 1979 three additional AN-26s were added to the group with Soviet markings, and two with Cuban airline markings were added to the Cuban group.

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Soviet involvement with the force was restricted to a few advisers, test pilots for new MIG aircraft, and reconnaissance flights.

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5. The AN-26 is a twin-turboprop, short-haul transport. It has a radius of 800 nautical miles and can carry either 38 lightly armed troops or 4.5 tons of equipment. Cuban AN-26s have been used with the Army's paratroop units, several of which are stationed nearby. The AN-26 is not capable of carrying the tanks and APCs belonging to the Soviet brigade.

6. Moscow has loaned Soviet-marked aircraft to the Cubans on at least two recent occasions. Beginning in January 1976, the USSR leased two IL-62s with Aeroflot markings and Soviet crews to the Cubans to shuttle troops to Angola. These aircraft continue to operate between Havana and Luanda.

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